

MTM/VF EIS

Community Narrative: Carcassone, Kentucky

Resident: Yes.

Interviewer: O.K., great, I have you on the phone. Just to start off, would you be able to tell me a little bit about yourself and your family?

Resident: I'm married. My husband he works on a strip job. I have two children and I have family members that work on strip jobs. That's pretty much it.

Interviewer: O.K., and your family still resides in the Clarkizone community?

Resident: Yes.

Interviewer: O.K., about what is the size of your community in terms of how many people live in Clarkizone?

Resident: In Carcassone, uh, I count we got maybe 250, something like that, not many.

Interviewer: And that's currently at this time. How long have you lived in Carcassone?

Resident: Uh, since I was 7 years old. I'm 42.

Interviewer: You are 42 and you have lived there since you were 7 years old. So you have been there quite a while?

Resident: Yes, uh huh.

Interviewer: What are your connections to the Carcassone area. Did you uh, uh, apparently if you were 7 years old, does your family, uh, did they move into the area at that time, or how did you, what are your connections?

Resident: Yes, my mom and my dad are both from this area and they moved to Indiana and had me and my sisters and then they moved back here and my dad got into the coal business and they found a house over here to live in, in Carcassone.

Interviewer: So your father worked for the coal, uh, in coal mining?

Resident: Yes.

Interviewer: O.K., how long ago was that?

Resident: Uh, Dad started in about 1967, 1968.

Interviewer: O.K., I'm gonna ask you a couple of questions about your quality of life in terms of

your community and how, uh, you have enjoyed uh your community.

Resident: O.K.

Interviewer: The first question. Did you observe or experience changes in quality in your quality of your life related to community resources? Uh, such as schools, public services or any types of the natural environment, like water quality concerns between the periods of we'll say 1980 up to the present time?

Resident: Uh, I'd say that the quality of the water and stuff like that, that has changed.

Interviewer: The quality of the water changed?

Resident: Yes.

Interviewer: In what way?

Resident: They were mining and stripping and we used to have really good well water. Our well is only like 65 feet down, something like that, and um, it just all of a sudden became real orange and nasty and you couldn't stand turning it on because it smelled and we finally contacted the coal company and uh they come and took samples and they put a filter in for us.

Interviewer: Did that, what, how did that affect your water quality after they installed the filter?

Resident: Well, for one thing, the water doesn't taste good like it used to. I mean it used to. It probably, you know, had a lot of stuff in it, a lot of bacteria stuff, but it just tasted really good, fresh, everybody would come to my house to get water.

Interviewer: And, is that the case today?

Resident: No. I don't have good water. I mean we got a filter, but it's different.

Interviewer: O.K. Any other besides the quality of your water, did the quantity, do you still have the amount of water that you currently did at the time before the mining affected the quality. Is there any changes in the amount of water that you receive?

Resident: So far we haven't seen that, and that's been a while, so I don't think that changed any, just like I said the water changed and well my sister-in-law, hers went dry and she had to get a well drilled and it's a problem where we live, there's no such thing as city water. It goes so far.

Interviewer: It's all on-lot well systems?

Resident: Yes, we have to drill our own wells.

Interviewer: You don't have any basically any public water services there being piped in from another source?

Resident: Yea, we don't have that. It goes just so far and it don't reach Carcassone yet.

Interviewer: Right. Um, what other, I'll ask you another question. You had said that currently there are 250 people approximately living in Carcassone, is that correct?

Resident: Uh huh.

Interviewer: The question is, what . . . was the community impacted by change in population or shift in local demographics, we'll say again between the period of 1980 to the current to the present day.

Resident: Uh, I don't know back then when I was growing up, it seemed like there was more people here.

Interviewer: And, if you perceived that there were more people, do you have any reason or uh, rephrase this correctly. Any perception of why the population may have declined?

Resident: Pretty much because once the kids grew up, there weren't nothing here to keep them. You know, jobs were, jobs still are, if you don't have a college education, you know, you either work in a fast food restaurant or you are working on a strip job and our kids have to get jobs or go off to school.

Interviewer: So there was other factors basically looking for employment opportunities and if they didn't like the choices of working in a fast food restaurant or the mining operations, they left the community, is that what you are saying?

Resident: Yea, pretty much so, I believe.

Interviewer: Or, if they wanted to get a, you know, beyond high school education that they went off to college then they of course moved out of the area as well.

Resident: Pretty much that.

Interviewer: And they uh, then I would assume that the ones that have left have never returned then?

Resident: No, its, right now, its pretty much, I guess the youngest would be like my family members, like my niece and they are continuing on over here. Uh, but uh, it's pretty much my age and our generation go here.

Interviewer: Um, do you, can I ask the question, do you plan on living there for a long time or?

Resident: Yes, we tore down my old family home and we rebuilt and I plan on staying here. We've got a lot of land and my son's going to college in the fall and uh, my daughter, she'll be going to college.

Interviewer: O.K. What is it about Carcassone that you like. I guess, what do you like most about Carcassone, I'll ask?

Resident: O.K., um well, for one thing, I guess where it's close near, you know, you can trust your neighbors, pretty much. Um, you have privacy, only thing is I hate the winter 'cause it's hard to get in and out if you don't have 4-wheel drive, but the summer, uh, it's really beautiful and you will have people not on top of each other, you know. You've got your neighbors to look out for you, I mean, over here, there's a lot of woods, [] we have I think 8 teachers that live around us and a doctor lives next door, uh.

Interviewer: Did you say teachers, 8 teachers?

Resident: 8 teachers.

Interviewer: O.K.

Resident: Uh, and then a doctor lives next door, uh, it's just I guess a close knit community, you know, they're there for you if you need them and you are there for them if you need them and pretty much you don't worry about your children and stuff like that. You know, if there is strangers that come through here and stuff, you got to worry about that, but I don't know, I guess, most of it's family really, if you come right down to it, if you go back probably 60 years, you will find that everybody's kin or something somewhere or another.

Interviewer: Right, exactly. Has, uh, during the time period when mining came in, when was mining introduced to the Carcassone community, do you know? Or is it still active?

Resident: Let's see, uh, stripping, I think come here in uh 1978, I'm not sure if that's exactly it, I know it's close, somewhere in that area is stripping, 'cause my husband, well, that was the year we got married, I believe, he, it's probably earlier than that because we got married in '78 and he worked out about a mile from where we lived out on the mountain. On a strip job. And I mean, they stripped it good, I mean, they took the whole mountain.

Interviewer: Is mining still going on in the Carcassone community now?

Resident: Uh, they mined underneath us, deep mined, about 10 years back and uh out there not real close to Carcassone, maybe 3 miles from us, I know the strip is still here.

Interviewer: So the operations are still ongoing there?

Resident: Oh yea.

Interviewer: O.K., uh, then that leads me to my next question, how it's tied into the previous question about your community. Um, since the mining operations have operated in the Carcassone community, the answers that you gave to me, uh, what do you like most about Carcassone, has any

of those likeable features about your community changed or have been impacted by the mining operation?

Resident: Uh, to be honest with you no, not really, although we, you get upset if like if a shot is put off and your foundation is cracked, you know, everybody gets upset about that, but personally, no one does anything about it unless it's a lot of damage to your property.

Interviewer: O.K.

Resident: I guess it's just you're used to that being a way of life. If half your family works full strip jobs and you know and I guess you just get used to it, I don't know.

Interviewer: You sort of become accustomed to your surroundings, I guess.

Resident: Yea, um, you know when a shot goes off at 5:00 or 4:00, uh, you don't even notice it any more. It's just like an everyday thing, not unless something falls off your wall or something like that.

Interviewer: Right. Regarding the future, and again, we are still talking about quality of life issues here, based upon the current mining activity and past mining activity, do you still view that your quality of life will remain the same in the future?

Resident: That's one thing about the mine, you never know from one day to the next what your quality of life's gonna be because basically, if your husband or if you or any of your family members work in the coal business, you don't know one day from the next if you've got a job because if it's not been a bad winter, they're not selling a bunch of coal, uh, your husband may be laid off and not only him but family members and then, you know, that's way a lot of people over here rely on but, we've got a lot more now that are going through different stuff besides the mining. But for quality of life with mining, I wouldn't get I would advise it to nobody.

Interviewer: O.K., now just to repeat the answer that you had given a little bit before, you said that people are moving south for the coal mining, is that what you said?

Resident: No, uh, they're just moving like the younger kids are normally having to leave uh home and a lot of them are not coming back over in Carcassone because there's nothing here for them really, you know, except the coal company and stuff like that. But it's like living over here I think everybody loved it. It's just to continue with their future and to make something of themselves, they pretty much have to leave not unless they become like a doctor, a teacher or something in the medical fields and stuff like that.

Interviewer: O.K., uh, what have been the benefits from the presence of surface mining in your community?

Resident: Uh, personally to me there's no benefit, uh. You know, they would keep the up, uh, donate stuff like to the community center something like that but I personally to me it paid my bills because my husband worked out there.

Interviewer: Right, right . . .

Resident: But, I hated it. I mean you should see out there. My kids on the weekends we go out there and for them to ride their four-wheelers and it's just a horrible big mess that you ride your four-wheelers through, you know.

Interviewer: In terms of where the mining has been taking place or . . .

Resident: No, I mean, its mountains are gone, history's gone, uh, you see forever, used to be you would look out your window, you see forever you see mountains. You know, I think that's the further, you got there and you can see mountains all the way in Virginia and Tennessee, you know, because you're up so high and it's all gone.

Interviewer: Right, so there's been in terms of scenic beauty, can I say that?

Resident: Yea, it's horrible.

Interviewer: O.K. The next couple of questions I want to ask you is about public relations, how the mining companies have interacted with the local community.

Resident: O.K.

Interviewer: The first question is what public information was available to you or to the community regarding the introduction or the presence of surface mining?

Resident: If I didn't read the paper, I didn't know about it. Uh, it was put in the local news in Malmego and uh if you can read that, you know they give notice in there and then sometimes it would be word-of-mouth. Sometimes someone would come and take maybe a sample of your water where they would be stripping.

Interviewer: They would come and sample your water, is that what you said?

Resident: They would come and take a sample of your water, uh, if you weren't at home, though, you know, you were out of luck. They'd come, some would come and take pictures around your home, uh, you know, in case they do any damage afterwards, they had the "before" pictures. Uh, we were at home and uh they took a snap shot of the crack in our foundation, but we never done nothing about it because we weren't here for them to take pictures, you know, to prove before and after here, and that's pretty much, you find out word-of-mouth, someone comes and says hey they're stripping around you or they're gonna strip behind you.

Interviewer: And you had said they put, did you say they put notices in the paper?

Resident: Yea, they put like notices about telling you the area that they graded, where it belongs to, know where I'm at but then they'll eventually say Carcassone area.

Interviewer: Would that be advertising the permit?

Resident: No this is to strip. They have to put it in the Mountaineer, they have to put it in the paper, uh, sometimes they strip so many different times, sometimes you will get a letter in the mail actually telling you. And a lot of times you'll see your name in the paper saying that they're gonna be stripping and you can't refuse it underneath, I mean mine underneath there, you know, I don't mind underneath it but uh, you know you'll see your name in the paper and they'll be underneath you.

Interviewer: O.K. I think you may have already touched upon a couple of things I'm gonna ask you next about the public relations. Uh, the question is were or are public relations between the community and the surface mining company continued beyond their initial contact, uh and if so, what types of circumstances.

Resident: Uh, lets see, they'll come back, like if there's a slip or you know, something like that, uh . . .

Interviewer: A slip meaning foundation or?

Resident: Well, like if they was to strip somewhere behind you know some high wall fell down behind your house, uh, like it rained a lot or something and it's because they were mining up above you or something, or stripping up above you, um they'll actually they come back for people and that's claimed their water was bad after they left and you know, and you know the miners drilled wells, they've caused a lot of wells to come dry. Um, wells went dry, we didn't have a well that dried, but you know, we got bad water, um, they'll come back and do stuff like that. Sometimes, I don't know, they did try to do everything they can after they strip, I've gotta give them credit for that.

Interviewer: O.K.

Resident: You can call and you can argue with them and they'll come out and they'll try their best to satisfy you, but if the aggravation of having to through all that plus looking at what they've done when they're through . . .

Interviewer: Right, right. Well, Resident, those are all the questions I have of you, I really appreciate your time, um, what I'm gonna do too I'm gonna give you my contact information again, if you have any follow-up questions or comments, again, my name is Troy Truax and again, I'm with Gannett Fleming, my company is Gannett Fleming, G-A-N-N-E-T-T and Fleming it's F-L-E-M-I-N-G and we're working with the Environmental Protection Agency, that's the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and my telephone number here at Gannett Fleming is 1-800-233-1055, and my extension number is 2143. And, I'll give you another individual's contact or point of reference, just to validate the, you know, why we're calling. The Environmental Protection Agencies Project Manager for this study, his name is Bill Hoffman. And, his telephone number is area code 215-814-2995.

Resident: Do you all have a web site?

Interviewer: Gannett Fleming has a web site, but I think most importantly, the Environmental Protection Agency has a web site specifically dedicated to this project. If you would go on to and uh, forgive me for not having it in front of me, it's www.epa.gov, and I believe the next is a forward slash or back slash and then type in Region 3 and hit enter, then try to do a search on Mountaintop Mining and that should take you to the exact, uh, there's a web site dedicated and there's also documents there and everything that's been uh basically been published as terms of public documents are on that web site and some background information on the project itself.

Resident: O.K.

Interviewer: And again, these interview notes, these are confidential in terms of your name, uh, you will not find any of this information that I'm aware of on that website . . .

Resident: That's okay, and if you did because, you know, I'm just being honest.

Interviewer: Right, so um, if, again, if you have any trouble with that website, please give me a call.

Resident: O.K.

Interviewer: I don't have, I'm not at my desk right now, I'm in a closed room to have some quiet for these interviews.

Resident: O.K., that's fine.

Interviewer: But, if you do have some trouble, please give me a call, I will be more than happy to help you.

Resident: O.K. Thank you very much.

Interviewer: Thank you again, and you have a good day.

Resident: O.K., you too.

Interviewer: O.K., bye now.

Resident: Bye Bye.